

RELIGION

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We have

already referred to *pan Juok* (p. 75), the country of the dead, to be reached after long wandering in the bush, but there is also a chthonic element in Shilluk ancestor worship; the spirit persists in or round the grave and may harm its living relatives, e.g. the death of a missionary's wife shortly after that of her husband was attributed to the ghost of the latter, while Hofmayr quotes a remark of the chief Yangjok to the effect that evil comes on man from below.¹ Again, the Shilluk undoubtedly fear the *cen*, the malevolent element that persists after the death of one who has died in hatred of friends or relatives, though here again the belief does not seem to bulk as largely as among the Acholi.

Offerings and sacrifice may be made to ancestors, but in our limited experience we have met with no instance that could certainly be dissociated from the cult of the royal ancestors or in which the ancestral spirits were not confused with or associated with Juok. It is true that Hofmayr describes offerings to ancestors² but his descriptions, taken for the most part from notes of colleagues, are not very convincing, as there is nothing to show that the cult of Nyakang or his descendants was specifically excluded. On the other hand he cites two short chants³ which may be regarded as evidence of prayer to the ancestors:—

tere kwaje mayegen

"The people entreat their mothers (ancestors)."

tere kwaje tiengen

"The people entreat their people (their dead)."

A hemorrhage followed by sudden death is called "the spears of the dead", i.e. the victim has been stabbed by a ghostly weapon, but the Shilluk expression, *tong tieng pa Juok*, seems to bring Juok into the matter. A more definite relation to ancestral spirits is seen in a note by Banholtzer, quoted by Hofmayr,⁴ to the effect that warriors obtained the services of an *ajuago* to invoke their ancestors, that the spirits of the slain may be harmless. A sheep is killed and part of the viscera placed in a pot and buried as an offering to those in the underworld.⁵

¹ Op. cit., 230.

² Op. cit., 229.

³ Op. cit., 230.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Oyster records that many Shilluk "take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an ancestor, usually the father. . . . The grain is made into a sort of butter and poured out on the grave. The man then says that he has given his father a taste" ("Nikawing's place in the Shilluk Religion": *S.N. & R.*, i, 1912, 206). But in another passage Oyster clearly shows an association of the ancestral spirit with Juok (for we assume that "God" is a translation of "Juok"): ". . . When prayer is to be offered to the spirit of a dead person, a female sheep is brought to the grave. If the person making the prayer is not the son of the

756 Many of the people say that if a man refuses to consult the medicine men, God will be angry with that person, and leave him to get along without help, which means that he will be cut off from all supernatural aid.

Many of the witch doctors are specialists, while others undertake to work charms for many different things. In practically every thing undertaken the witch doctor is consulted. If a man is going on a journey he lets the medicine man work over him to give him safety from dangers seen and unseen. Very frequently before a hunt the witch doctor assures them of success in the chase, and in the hunting of dangerous animals he ties the quarry so that it will not be able to injure the hunters. A thief who hopes to steal a cow often goes to a witch doctor, and has a charm wrought over him so that the people of the village will not be aroused by any sound he may make. The witch doctor gives victory when the people are going out to war. He also detects the men, who are to be killed in the fight, and he works a charm over them, which causes the impending death to be averted. The power to kill by magic resides in the witch doctor, and many other things are done by them. Diseases are supposed to yield to their charms. The power to cure snake bites, and to heal a burn by spitting on it are special powers belonging to only a few. Many are able to give a fetish, which protects its owner.

The witch doctor will not treat himself when ill, and he does not treat the members of his own family. He goes to some other witch doctor to be helped.

756 The fetish plays a very large part in the work of a witch doctor. He gives the little charms for many different purposes. They are supposed to give protection on a journey, to insure success in courtship, to protect from wild animals, to insure a favourable judgment, to protect cattle in crossing a river, and many other powers are ascribed to them. However a fetish is only effective for the one purpose for which it was obtained.

756 One medicine man, when asked how he cured a patient, said: "I first collect a small fee, and then I work over the patient. When the patient recovers I return and collect a large fee".

The dismissal of a patient is attended with some ceremony. The patient and witch doctor make a trip to the river in the evening.

SHILLUK NOTES

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When someone has been stunned by lightning, the proper treatment is for two men to take the patient by the heels and, with his head hanging down, to dip his head in water. He is then taken from the water, but continues to hang head downward. After he has been held in this position for some time, snails and frogs will pour out of his mouth, and he will then be restored to health. One man assured me that he had once seen the frogs and snails come from a patient. 752 ● 821

When a person is killed by lightning he is not buried as other men. If his death occurs in a house the walls are pushed down over him, and form his grave. If he is killed out in the open, each person in the village is supposed to bring a bit of earth and throw on him, and thus the grave is formed. It is thought that anyone who refuses to do that will be struck by lightning. 766 821

The person who is killed by lightning is not mourned as other people. The ox that is killed immediately after his death is looked upon as an offering to Deñ rather than as a sacrifice for the dead. The relatives are not to weep for them as they do for those taken by disease. The thought seems to be that the man who is struck by lightning is called by Deñ, and that it is an honour to be called by Deñ, and that weeping and lamenting over such a death would be dishonouring to Deñ. Death by lightning is looked upon as bad, but not as bad as death that comes through disease. The family of the deceased is supposed to be prospered. They feel that the family has made an offering to the higher powers, and they in turn should be blessed by the higher powers for the offering they have made. 782

When a house is struck by lightning the war cry is given. The men all run to the river with the tips of their spears pointing upward. The spears are waved in imitation of the lightning. This is done so that Deñ will fear and return to the upper regions. Then they run to the boat landing where they throw their spears on the ground. Then each man cuts a bit of green grass. He carries this grass to the fire and throws it on the blaze. Occasionally, instead of running to the river in that manner, they run to the fire with their hands raised as if in supplication, and they give the war cry as they run. 787 821

A day or two after the fire, as soon as the walls are cooled, the people assemble. If no one has been killed in the house, a sheep is killed and cooked and beer is made. After the sheep is cooked, bits are cut from 342 782 821